

David Shambaugh

China Goes Global: The Partial Power

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Mobile phones, home appliances, cars, clothes, toys... Every single day, people all over the world are confronted with Chinese products and many are still not aware of the extent to which China influences their lives. Although China's international image often has negative connotations it is definitely a rising superpower, which still has a lot to display and prove in the international community. On the other hand, the sheer geographical and cultural remoteness still causes insufficient global understanding of the functioning of the country in general. The author of the book „China goes global: the partial power“, David Shambaugh, realized the significance of this lack of knowledge and decided to provide his view on the global picture of China. He is a Professor of Political Science & International Affairs and the founding Director of the China Policy Program at George Washington University. The publication is based on five years of extensive research and travels around the world, including a year in China. Starting with the preface, the book is divided into eight main parts and each part into several chapters, in which the author addresses China's global identities, economy, culture and security, as well as Chinese foreign policy.

In the first chapter, Shambaugh discusses China's global impact felt in every corner of the world. The figures show that today China is the second leading power, after the United States. The secret behind China's rapid growth and global rise lies in its specific development strategy- to gain strength not just in one, but in multiple dimensions - technology, economy, culture, education, the military, diplomacy etc. Although China's global reputation declined in recent years, which can be seen through many anti-Chinese protests and actions that occurred around the world, it is believed that in the near future China will overtake the United States and become the leading global superpower.

In the second part, the author writes about China's global identity - and how China itself sees it. Problematically as it sounds, there are as much as seven Chinese global identities that influence China's ideas in domestic

discourse, as well as its international role: the Nativists, the Realists, the Major Powers School, Asia First, the Global South School, Selective Multilateralists and the Globalists. This indicates that China is still a deeply hesitant country - it does not have a unique international vision of itself and still has to evolve. Chinese leaders are focused on economic development and are primarily concerned with the bolstering of the Party's image at home. Various estimates point out that China's top officials dedicate less than one fifth of their time to international affairs. This has an adverse impact on forging the regional and global identities of China's leaders.

The third chapter considers China's global diplomatic presence and its particularities. Shambaugh believes that China's diplomacy is truly global - it has developed diplomatic relations with 175 countries, has membership in more than 150 international organizations and is a party to more than 300 multilateral treaties. According to the author, China's foreign policy process can be divided into five concentric circles. The first two include the highest-level decision-making authorities, and the ministries. The third circle includes intelligence agencies, think tanks, policy advisory bodies and universities. The following circles consist of provinces and municipalities, and finally society. After briefly analyzing all of these foreign policy circles, Shambaugh concludes that this aspect of China is as complex as its global identities. China somehow remains a discreet diplomatic actor - its voice can be heard, but is nowhere to be seen. It pursues only its priorities in the global community, such as economic modernization and national security. On the other hand, it barely takes part in multilateral discussions which are not directly related to its „destiny“. Therefore, China's global presence remains „shallow“ in the author's words.

The fourth part of the book talks about China and global governance and is in a way connected to the previous chapter. Considering the fact that globalization is as a process taking an ever more important position in international relations, the concept of global governance and solving problems at the international level becomes crucial for every modern and developed state. It is evident that every state plays a different role in that sense when it comes to providing global public goods: some of them being very constructive, and others not as much. China was a somewhat passive actor in international relations, but has been getting more active over the last decade. Their essential task is

still to achieve national benefits for themselves, rather than contributing to the international community. The criticism over the lack of China's engagement with issues such as global warming and global security invokes two major responses from China's political establishment. It is often stated that being the world's most populous country, the greatest contribution to the world that China can provide is surely to successfully govern itself. As opposed to this stance, the more nationalistic position taken by some foreign policy circles treats global responsibility talk as a ploy to mold China into the existing liberal international order. However, both positions are at odds with effectively projecting influence outside its closest domain.

The next chapter analyses China's economic particularities and development. In 2011 China was the world's second-largest economy, the largest energy consumer and had the highest average annual growth rate in the world. The author also calls it „the Trading Superstate“, being the major producer of machine tools, footwear, computers, cameras, textiles etc. and exporting them worldwide. China's top trade partners are the United States, Japan and Hong Kong. Even though these facts sound enlightening, China is increasingly dependent on international energy resources, such as oil, electricity, iron ores and other natural supplies. The author also analyses aspects of investment and aid, and their impact on the world. He comes to the conclusion that, considering its dependency on the outside world, China is not as great of an economic power as it seems. China's outbound investments and corporate takeovers in the developed world are still minuscule. Furthermore, China still struggles with many challenges in its domestic economy. The key issue lies in the lack of compatibility between the financial repression model of economic growth and China's goal of currency internationalization. The latter process requires further economic and financial liberalization. The diminished role of the US dollar and its replacement by RMB necessarily comes at the expense of China's current growth model. Inevitably, it requires fundamental redistribution of economic and political power within China itself, a very uneasy and uncertain process. Some of the challenges China still has to cope with are the maintenance of employment and keeping its GDP on track, despite having the biggest debt level of all the developing countries.

The sixth part of the book talks about China's global cultural presence through media, newspapers, books, exchange organizations, education, literature, art, fashion and design, films, tourism and sports. China is trying to enhance its „soft power“ through the ability to attract others by persuasion, cultural wealth and specific discourse. According to the author, China is not as successful in this objective as it may seem - its image in international society is not very positive. Moreover, there are only a few countries that would want to be similar to China. Soft power is something that comes naturally, usually from society, and not artificially from the government, as China's authorities reckon.

The next-to-last chapter deals with China's global security role. Nowadays, China is considered to be the world's second military force, but it only takes part in missions in its nearest surroundings. China still dedicates more resources to internal security than to the People's Liberation Army. Nevertheless, in the last two decades it has ramped up its military expenditures significantly. Nowadays, it possesses developed military resources and still invests in their modernization. Moreover, it is highly likely that China will proceed with this kind of conduct in the future - as long as it remains its national interest. The book finally discusses all the issues mentioned in the previous chapters, and tries to answer the key question - how will Chinese influence change the world.

Often compared to the United States, it can be concluded that China is still not an equal rival to such a world superpower. Sometimes overestimated, China still seeks its own identity and its "place under the sun" in international relations. It is surely true that China is an economic miracle, but has to work on other aspects of development, and will for some time in the future remain a partial power. If China has the intention of becoming the world's greatest power, it has to work on its global image, because around the world it is often seen as rather isolated and culturally inferior. On the other hand, because of its people's mentality, China possesses a lot of potential to succeed in that objective. Only time will tell whether Chinese leadership can succeed in projecting international influence as effectively as transforming the country's economy in the period between 1978-2008.

Shambaugh's book represents a great read for academic society and everyone curious about how China, a country of many contradictions, treads its path to become a major power.

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